

1996 and issued as United States Patent No. 5,727,569 issued on March 17, 1998. The priority of this application is expressly claimed and disclosure is hereby incorporated by reference.--

IN THE CLAIMS:

Please cancel claims 25-32.

Please add new claims 33-40 as follows.

33. (New) A method for fixing a portion of the surface of the heart during a surgical procedure, comprising:

accessing a surface of the heart;

positioning a member having at least one suction port on the surface of the heart;

applying a negative pressure to said at least one suction port;

affixing the member to the surface of the heart with the negative pressure applied to said at least one suction port; and

attaching the member to a stable support.

34. (New) A method for fixing a portion of the surface of the heart during a surgical procedure, comprising:

accessing a surface of the heart;

positioning a member having at least one suction port on the surface of the heart;

applying a negative pressure to said at least one suction port; and

affixing the member to the surface of the heart with the negative pressure applied to said at least one suction port.

35. (New) As part of a surgical procedure on the heart, a method comprising:

accessing the surface of the heart;

providing an instrument comprising a dome-shaped housing having a bottom surface shaped to engage a portion of the surface of the heart and further comprising means for introducing a negative pressure to the interior of said housing;

bringing said bottom surface into contact with said portion of the surface of the heart;

applying a negative pressure through said means for introducing a negative pressure; and

attaching said housing to said portion of the surface of the heart whereby said portion of the surface of the heart becomes fixed relative to said instrument.

36. (New) The method of claim 35 further comprising the step of manipulating said instrument whereby said portion of the surface of the heart is elevated relative to the remainder of the heart.

37. (New) The method of claim 35 wherein said bottom surface comprises a contact layer to facilitate forming a tight seal with said portion of the surface of the heart when said negative pressure is applied.

38. (New) The method of claim 37 wherein said contact layer comprises an impermeable material.